
JOURNAL OF THE
BARBER COIN COLLECTORS' SOCIETY

Volume 8, #4

Winter 1997



1900-S, Quarter



Die break through stars



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BCCS CHARTER MEMBER #2

JOURNAL OF THE
BARBER COIN COLLECTORS' SOCIETY

Published quarterly. Dedicated to bringing together people with similar interests in Barber Coinage for the purpose of advancing appreciation of this series.

OFFICERS

- Philip Carrigan *President*
Russell Easterbrooks *Editor, BCCS Journal*
Paul Reuter *Secretary/Treasurer*
Tom Mulvaney *Photographer*
Regular Contributing Editor *Jack White and Chris Weeks*
-

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For Society issues in general, etc.: Phil Carrigan, 1105 N. Crescent Court, Round Lake, IL 60073, Tel. 847-937-5129 day, 847-546-5609 evening, 847-938-2510 fax, Email: philip.carrigan@abbott.com

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BCCS PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This message, written at late-December, will close the Society's 1997 year. You'll find elsewhere statistical and financial data which attests to the health of BCCS. Paul indicates we are running about 85% retention of present members and recruiting new faces to maintain a total of 290+ members. We can do better in this area with some personal invitations and local coin club solicitation.

I raised some ideas in the last message concerning a member directory and a contact person for major shows (e.g., FUN, Long Beach). I haven't heard from anyone on these ideas! I'm easily contacted (see page 1) and would welcome pro or con input. The FUN Show will be held January 8th. This has proven to be a meeting ground for BCCS members and will no doubt repeat next month.

Have members noticed the trickle of Barber (Liberty) Nickels articles appearing in the *Journal*? I'm pleased to see research and writing in this series. I recall when the BCCS was founded by Steve Epstein, individuals asking what's new to discover with Barbers? The record over eight volumes of the Society's journal indicates a significant body of new information has appeared. The nickel series no doubt holds a few secrets as well.

Last week I was looking through a 1960's auction sale where an extensive collection was offered from a deceased collector. Included was a complete set of Barber quarters! However, the set was comprised of high-grade, brilliant proofs 1892 to 1915 and G-VG examples of all branch mint dates. This serves to underscore the 1893 Heaton monograph on mint-marked dates where collecting branch mint coins was advocated. Better grade on Barbers, branch mints especially, are difficult to find today due to early neglect.

A few thoughts on the JJPittman Sale Part I, held in October. David Akers prepared an informative catalog describing John's outstanding coins. John was a collector and a skilled individual in these endeavors. His coins, as presented in this first sale show his diligence in finding rare examples, his cunning in securing material not known to the general fraternity. John's collection does not mirror Eliasberg in one key aspect: He obtained every coin based on his own election; there was no pre-existing base such as Clapp nor were his coins hand-picked at the mint. We all learn over time how to select nice-for-the-grade coins. Some of the Pittman coins were ordinary or less, representing pieces bought early in the assembly of the collection. If you review the catalog, particularly the Barber dimes, recognizing the grading and descriptions were decidedly conservative. The prices realized are in line with quality as opposed to being solely driven by the Pittman pedigree. I feel privileged to now own John's 1911-S Barber dime.

My best wishes to each member for the holiday season and forthcoming new year.

Phil Carrigan



FROM THE EDITOR

This journal completes my first year as editor for our society. It has been an enjoyable learning experience, and I look forward to contributing my time in the coming year. I would like to thank every one who contributed articles and photo's to the production of our journal, as your help is essential.

Once again its time to renew your membership. Some members have already paid their dues for 1998. If your journal contains a renewal notice, please take a moment to send your dues {\$15.00} to Paul Reuter. (address on page #1) Paul tells me we had 33 new members during 1997. Our societies continued growth depends on our membership.

I'm looking at the idea of changing the color of the journal's cover for 1998. This would help with organizing your journals by year on the book shelf. Please feel free to note your suggestions, ideas, and comments on your renewal notice, as your voice is important.

As we enter the new year Barber "finds" and "discoveries" will continue to advance our society and your enjoyment with numismatics. Last years Eliasberg and Pittman collections represented some of the most sought after coins to be sold at auction. Tho, some of these coins prices surpassed the budget of many collectors, the effort put into assembling such vast collections is a goal admired by every collector. Happy new year and may your numismatic enjoyment highlight 1998.

Russell Easterbrooks



THE JOURNAL NEEDS YOUR ARTICLES!

If you've got some information to share with our Society,
we'd like to publish it. Our Society needs your input!
Send your articles and information for the Barber Bits section, to;
Russell at the address, on page one.

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS MARCH 15

TREASURER'S NOTE

.....

Last year we had some confusion at dues renewal time that resulted in a number of members paying their dues twice. Rather than returning the second payment with an explanation, we decided to credit the second payment toward the 1998 dues. If you received a renewal notice with this journal, we ask that you pay your dues for 1998. If you did not receive a notice, your dues are already paid for 98!

Also, this is the time of year when we try to make address corrections. Please check on this so that your journals reach you in a timely fashion.

Paul Reuter



BCCS Treasurer's Report

Twelve Months ending December 31, 1997

Opening Balance January 1, 1997		\$4042.68
Receipts:		
Dues	\$3574.00	
Back Issues	296.00	
Donation	87.00	
Advertising	1500.00	
Total		\$5457.00
Funds Available		\$9499.68
Expenditures:		
Journal Production	\$5248.53	
Postage	169.71	
Bank Charges	7.90	
ANA Dues	33.00	
Refund	3.00	
Total		\$5462.14
Closing Balance December 31, 1997		\$4037.54

Paul Reuter, Treasurer/Secretary

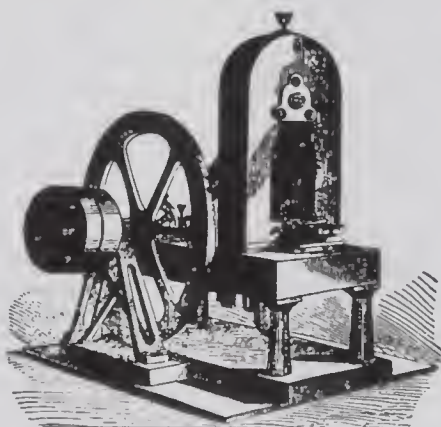
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

10-13-97

Dear Russell,

I've been meaning to send you a couple of things you might be able to use in the BCCS journal, since I'm off from work today hopefully I can get this to you. First, I've recently been taking photos, and scanning them into my computer, of all the coins in my Barber collection. I noticed the 1909-O Barber Half appeared to have a clear repunched 1 in the date. I've enclosed a printed photo and some enlargements on a 3.5 disk. I looked thru some of my old journals and could not find anything on this variety. Has it been reported before? Second, I've enclosed a copy of what I call my "Circulated State/Eye Appeal System". I came up with this for my personal use several years ago, and thought it might be of interest and use to other collectors. Hopefully other BCCS members will find it helpful. You can print it in the journal, if you are interested. The reason I developed this was to be able to compare the way two coins looked without having both coins side beside each other. The problem I was having was, as most collectors do I would take a list of the coins I needed to a show and look for those but, when upgrading once you have a number of coins it is hard to remember what each one looks like. I'd run into this – say I found a nice 1897-S half in VF-20 and bought it as the one I currently have grades F-15, then once I got home and compared the two coins, the F-15 had perfect surfaces, and the VF-20 coin had a couple of minor marks or spots etc. and I would over all prefer to keep the F-15 in coin in my No. 1 collection. I came up with the Circulated State system to prevent this from happening. Once you get used to using this method (see enclosed chart I devised, hopefully it is self explanatory) you can very simply list all the coins you have, and know about what they look like. Thus, making it much easier to compare coins when upgrading. It would be nice if all dealers used this system or a similar method when listing coins for sale. A written ad listing only date and grade (for wear) gives me only part of what I want to know. To me a coins surfaces, color, originality, and eye appeal is as important as the physical grade. Hopefully you can use this in a future issue of the journal. If you have any questions, call or write. Keep up the good work.

Thanks,
Randy Holder



CIRCULATED STATE/EYE APPEAL SYSTEM

Circulated State is expressed by a parenthesis with 2 numbers inside. The first number corresponds to the coins toning or color, and the second number corresponds to the coins surfaces. The numbers equal levels 1 to 5.

Level	1st Number = Coins toning or color	2nd Number = Coins surfaces
5 PERFECT	100% original very attractive natural color. Usually antique coloring-darker in protected areas of the coins design and lighter in open areas and fields. Toning is balanced-side to side, top to bottom, obverse and reverse match.	No nicks, scratches, rim bumps, or damage of any kind. Nothing that is noticeable to the naked eye or even with low magnification.
4 VERY NICE	100% original attractive natural color. Usually antique coloring but, color may not be completely balanced. Top, bottom or one side a little darker or lighter than the other. Or possibly the obv. and rev. not completely matched.	Minute detractions – things that are not noticeable to the naked eye, but show with low magnification. Such as a hairline, very minor old nick, or a dark speck, etc.
3 AVERAGE	100% original acceptable color. Coin may have different obverse and reverse coloring, or maybe not very much antique coloring or coin may be a little dark, or have minor mottled uneven toning.	Average distractions – things that can be seen with the naked eye, but do not stand out, you have to look for them. Such as small marks or nicks, or a minor scuff, or several hairlines, or a very small rim bump, etc.
2 BELOW AVERAGE	Original looking color but, may be questionable as to being 100% original. Toning may be uneven or blotchy or very mottled, or unusual looking colors or maybe too dark thus hiding details.	Detractions that are noticeable to the naked eye. Such as – a scratch, many hairlines, a medium sized rim bump or nick, corrosion spots, etc
1 PROBLEM COIN	Unattractive color, or NOT original – the coin has been cleaned at one time, or a unnatural looking coin, or one that has been artificially toned or recolored.	Very noticeable detractions. Such as – a large scratch, or large areas of corrosion, severe hairline scratches, large spots, large scuff marks or rim bumps, etc.

EXAMPLE: 1898-O Barber Half F-12 (5,4)

This would be a half grading Fine-12 for wear (Photograde and ANA standards used). With level 5 – Perfect 100% original very attractive antique color, and level 4 – Very nice surfaces, with only a minute nick or speck visible with magnification.

1909-O Barber Half



Date/Mint: 1909-O

Rarity F/FV: R2

Mintage: 925,400

Date Bought: Jan 91

Current Value: \$84.00

Varieties: 1/1909 RPD

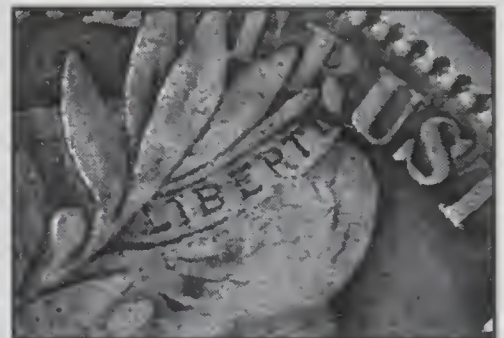
Grade: VF-25

Cir. State: (5,4)

Ranking: (17/73)

Cost: \$30.00

7-97



Comments:

Possible RPD 1/1909



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

.....

Editors Note: Paul forwarded this letter to me from a fellow collector living in Russia!

Date: August 10, 1997

Dear Paul Reuter

With greetings from Krasnodar!

You know I have found the article by Bill Fivaz "Why Not Join a Specialty Club?" (The July 1997 Numismatist issue) of great interest and also found the address of the Society. You know I would like to get more information on your Society and also would like to join your club. Could you please send the information on the club as well as sample copies of magazines and publications the Society issues to the above-mentioned address.

Thank you so much for your great help.

Look forward to hearing from you soon.

With best wishes,

Nick

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THERE ARE COINS TO FIND

.....

By Joe Haney

In the summer *Journal* I said I thought we were moving into a new era of the Barber Coin Collectors Society. Not only do I still think this way but I believe the entire hobby is on the move. Each club that forms and the others that are expanding are studying more and delving deeper into the coins they collect. Those of us that collect Barber coins are finding out there is more to each set than just date, mint mark, and grade. In my opinion, and it has no club sanction, variety coins *are* the new era.

Most of us find it extremely difficult to improve or complete our normal sets. Especially the Barber series. The material is just not out there. The people that have these coins are holding onto them. So much so that it will probably be a long time before we see our search at an end. In the meantime we have the opportunity to keep an eye out for the different coins. The variety coins. They *are* out there. And probably with a lesser price tag than most of the normal ones we are searching for. Remember a variety coin that might even be a discovery coin does not have to be MS 65. Pick up a *Journal* or any coin publication and you will find a few nice coins that are just a little bit different from the norm. A repunched mint mark, a doubled date, or doubling in the letters will always make a nice addition to any collection. But first we must train ourselves to look for them. After you pick out one or two of these varieties you will be well on your way to what I believe is the final and ultimate step in the evolution of coin collecting.

This ultimate step will never end. You can collect to your heart's content. There will always be one more coin to find. When you get the one coin that you think is the very last variety, I am going to find one more that I know will be the last. You in turn will start the process over again with just one more find.

Find one new discovery coin and your name is in the history books. Every time a new specimen of that coin turns up, your name will be associated with it. In the summer *Journal*, our contributing editor, Jack White, brought our attention to an 1890 Liberty Head five cent piece with a repunched date as seen in another publication. This was thought to be a discovery piece except for the fact that I had featured the same variety in the Spring, 1996 edition of the *Journal*. Thanks Jack.

For the record, the 1895-S Barber Quarter pictured on page 22, of the summer *Journal* is not a Large 'S' over a Small 'S' mint mark. The same coin can be found in John Wexler's RPM book. I also sent a copy to Dave Lawrence that he published in his book, *The Complete Guide to Barber Quarters*, 2nd edition. Both books list it as an S/S west. Closer examination will show it to be just that.

Hopefully I will be able to work up an article on this subject for the next edition of the *Journal*. Many times a person believes a coin to be a new discovery and has no place to turn to check it out. Good hunting.

P.S. For those of you that save only the straight Barber coins, my deepest admiration. You are probably the true hobbyist in the deepest sense of the word. But we must always try to move ahead even though the new is sometimes a bitter pill to swallow. ❖



Barber's Quarters For Sale

1892-S	AU55, light to medium toning	\$275
1897-O	VF35, nice and original	\$250
1897-S	XF40, original light to medium gray	350
1898-O	VF35/30, orig. med. gray, was ANACS XF40	175
1900-O	AU53, choice original, was NGC AU53	350
1901-O	XF40, orig. medium gold/gray toning	350
1902-S	XF40 barely, choice original	90
1903-S	XF40/45, original medium gold	110
1905-O	XF45, nice and original, rare!	350
1909-O	VF30, original light gray	175
1909-O	ANACS XF45, orig. light gold/gray, rare!	395
1909-S	AU50+, light gold toning, lustrous	195
1911-S	XF40, original medium gray	95
1913	XF40/45, nice and original, gold/gray	375
1914-S	VF20, light gray original	175

Call evenings for more information. Other dates available. Checks must clear.

Please add \$5.00 for postage and handling. 10 day return privilege.

Doug Veal, BCCS #738
 5747 Addison Ave. NE
 Cedar Rapids, IA 52402
 Phone: (319) 395-9452 evenings

SEARCHING FOR VARIETIES

By Russell Easterbrooks

Searching for varieties has elevated collector interest, and ultimately contributed to the numismatic popularity of the past few years. Barber coins have enjoyed a great number of variety “sighting”, largely because these coins were not as thoroughly researched over the years as other coin series. Certain Barber dimes in particular display many different varieties, and experience indicates you simply can’t pass a chance to examine these dates. The 1892, 1898, and 1908 dimes from any of the mints, exhibit a staggering number of varieties. J.T. Stanton a noted variety expert recently stated, “There are literally thousands of known repunched dates for Barber dimes dated 1908.” Dave Lawrence’s excellent Barber books highlight many Barber varieties, enhancing collectors chances of finding these interesting coins.

Dealers are taking a more active role in recognizing and advertising varieties in their stock. However, small coin shows offer the Barber enthusiast an opportunity to locate varieties that can be over looked. I always take the time to examine the 1892, 98, and 1908 dimes when ever these dates are present in a dealers stock. More times than not, those dates will feature repunched dates, die breaks of all sorts, and other interesting varieties.

The following photo’s are just the tip of the iceberg. Happy hunting Barber collectors. ♦



1892



1898

Photography by Tom Mulvaney





1898 from
Ralph Vignola



1892

NEW ORLEANS COINAGE OF 1898

By Jack White

Now that 1898 coinage has reached the century mark in terms of age, I'd like to discuss the New Orleans coinage of that year. The 1898-O has never received its just due as far as a year and mint mark date in the Barber series, as have the 1896-S, 1897-O, 1897-S, 1901-S, and 1913-S. However all three denominations nearly always come weakly struck, and all are difficult to find in all but the lowest grades. They are underpriced and underappreciated.

The 1898-O dime is the easiest of the three Barber coins to locate in all grades. It has the highest mintage of the three, and nearly always comes better struck on the reverse than the obverse. Coins with four to five letters of the word "LIBERTY" visible often have fine to very fine detail and better on the reverse. The wholesale price spread between VG and F is about nil. This dime doesn't draw the attention of the better "O" mints, 1894-97, but ranks with the 1893, 1899, 1900, and 1908 and is challenging to find fully struck. By far the most available of the 1898-O Barber coinage.

The 1898-O quarter is very underpriced and under-rated. It is one of the great "sleepers" of all Barber coinage. Coins grading VG are tough, and better grades are extremely difficult to find. I've seen only one problem free F to VF coin in the past eight years! The price spread for VG to F coins at the wholesale level is about 4:1. The F price of \$40 is absurd. It's far tougher than the 1898-O dime in all grades, especially F and above. Although priced less than the 1896, 1897, 1901, and 1905, it has been my experience that it is as difficult as any New Orleans mint quarter to locate in F and above. The 1909-O would be its only rival. Price wise it's clearly the most underrated "O" mint Barber quarter in F-VF. It has the best strike of the 1898-O Barber coinage.

The 1898-O half is the best known of the 1898-O date and mint. It doesn't have the reputation of the 1892 and 1897 halves. It is far tougher than the 1893, 1896, or 1905 New Orleans halves in F and above. David Lawrence calls it the most undervalued half in the series F and VF, due to its poor strike and mintage. I believe it is more difficult than the 1892-O in any grade F and above. The 1897-O is the highest priced Barber half dollar in F to AU, which is two to four times more expensive than the 1898-O in similar grades, though the availability is about even. Another interesting feature of the 1898-O half is the presumed existence of a micro mintmark. This micro "O" is found on a small quantity of 1892-O coins. The 1898-O micro "O" half may or may not exist, although it has been written about since 1929. The 1898-O half is readily available in grades of AG to VG, but very difficult above VG. Strike and originality are major concerns in locating nice examples in all but the lowest grades. ♦

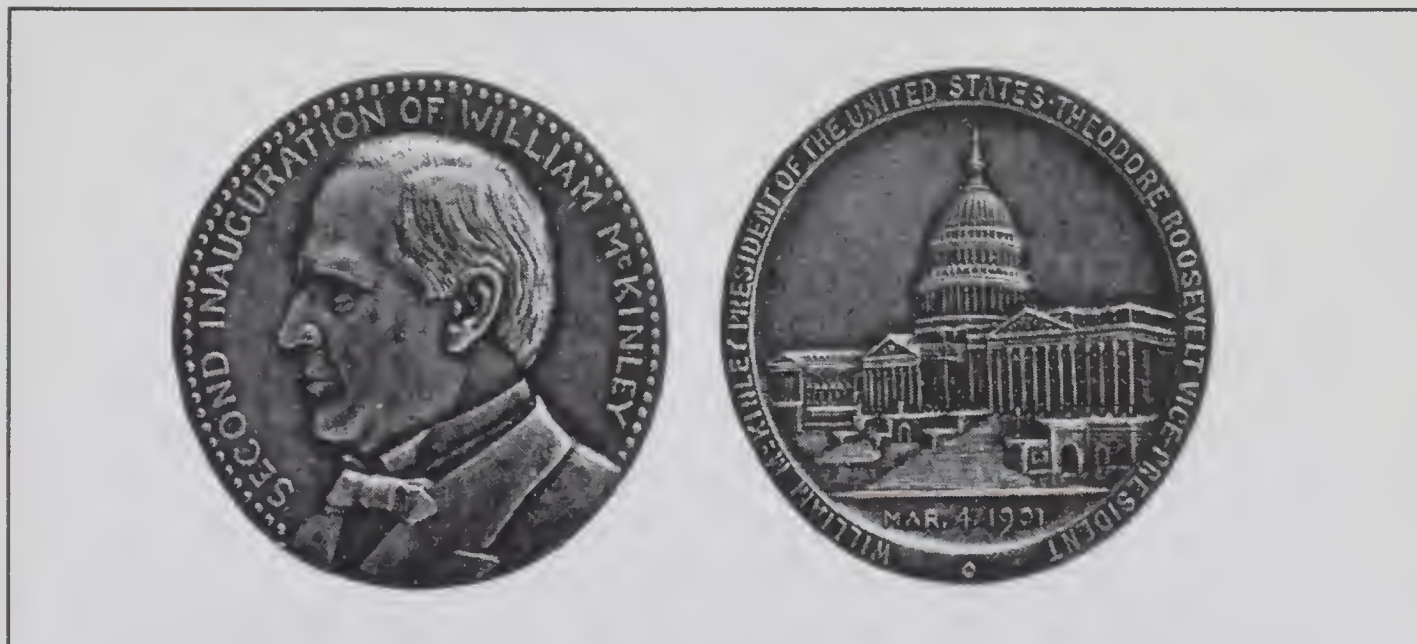
PRESIDENTIAL MEDALS OF CHARLES E. BARBER

I hope we all know of the circulating coins designed by Charles Barber. After doing some research, I found out that he also designed two Presidential medals.

The first of these medals was the William McKinley medal in 1901. This medal is made of bronze, it measures 76 mm, with a profile portrait of McKinley facing left with just his name on the obverse. After McKinley's death on September 16, 1901 Theodore Roosevelt took the oath of office, so a medal was made for his Presidency by Barber. Roosevelt's medal was pretty much the same as McKinley's, 76 mm with a profile facing left.

I have not seen the reverse of either of these medals, so I can't say for sure what they look like. I do know that the inaugural committee for both Presidents had inaugural medals made by copying the presidential medals.

The obverse of the McKinley inaugural medal has the same portrait of McKinley and around the edge is SECOND INAUGURATION OF WILLIAM MCKINLEY. The reverse is a picture of the White House and at the bottom of the steps is the date MAR. 4, 1901. Around the picture is WILLIAM MCKINLEY PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. THEODORE ROOSEVELT VICE-PRESIDENT. The inaugural medals are made of gold, silver and bronze and measure 44 mm.



*McKinley inaugural medal
Silver, 44 mm
Private Collection*



*Roosevelt inaugural medal
Bronze, 44 mm
Private Collection*

The reverse of the Roosevelt inaugural medal was designed by George T. Morgan, Barber's assistant. It has oak and olive leaves at the bottom right in a partial circle around INAUGURATED PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES MARCH 4 1905. The inaugural medal for both Presidents were struck by Joseph K. Davison Company of Philadelphia.

The Presidential Medals and Inaugural Medals are very confusing, so I hope my facts are correct. I am sure my fellow Barber collectors will update me if they are incorrect. If you have any other information on these presidential medals, please write to me.

Mike Mitchell, 915 E. Mesquite, Bayfield, CO 81122

Source of information: Neil MacNeils *The President's Medal 1789-1977* ❖



U.S. Mint Philadelphia

CONCENTRATE ON ONE SERIES

By David Lawrence

As a dealer for almost 20 years I have often talked to people who are starting out by buying coins "all over the place." Sometimes it's because they can't resist "a good deal," most often it's simply because they just don't know where to begin their collection. Often they think collecting just one kind of coin is less interesting because they all look alike. I have always thought this was a mistake and have advised selecting just one series and concentrating on it. In Barbers, this may also mean just working on one of the denominations at a time.

My reasoning is this: if you focus on one series you will learn all the nuances, many of which are not obvious in the beginning. Let's take Barber Quarters as an example. At first glance it's clear the 1901-S is the key. But on further analysis it becomes obvious that there are several others which are better buys. I'm thinking of the 1896-S in most MS grades as well as the 98-S, 96-O, and 01-O, just to name those with certified populations almost as low as the 01-S (but costing a fraction of the price).

Another fact: some dates are so hard to find in XF and AU that they have tremendous demand in MS even though their populations are somewhat plentiful. But, with fairly high "pops," their prices in MS are quite reasonable. In

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this category I put first & foremost the 1905-O. But the 97-S, 08-S, 09-O & 14-S also belong.

Third: some dates are very common in XF & AU (at least to AU50) but really tough in MS. If you studied the series you know this. If not, you may walk into a trap. Here I place the three Philippine hoard dates: 1898-S, 99-S, 00-S.

I could go on and on. There are strike considerations, considerations about how some dates come (proof-like, frosty, satiny, or flashy to name a few), considerations of initial mintage vs. survivorship, etc. The point is, if you roll up your sleeves and really get into a series you will get to know most of this and, besides making good buying decisions, you will increase your enjoyment ten fold. No collector is happier than the one who has just nabbed a really tough date, like a 1909-O in AU, from a dealer who thinks it is just another coin! ♦



What Can I Do For You?

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- Appraise collections or individual pieces on an hourly basis
- Assist in the ORDERLY disposition of current holdings at current values

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DOUBLE DIE 1892-S BARBER QUARTER

By D. W. Dixon

Recently while on a trip through West Virginia I stopped in to view a local coin dealer's cases for any new acquisitions needed for my collection. I had struck out on a couple of previous stops earlier in the day. This was a very small local guy and I really didn't expect to find anything new. Over in the corner of one of his cases was an 1892-S quarter which I asked to examine. The coin was a very good plus that had been cleaned and was starting to re-tone. It had a portion of each letter in LIBERTY visible but just did not have quite enough detail on the obverse to make a fine. The reverse was a solid VG. Nothing really special but I was happy to fill the hole in my set. Besides, the 1892-S is a kind of under-rated date in my opinion. After a short negotiation I headed home with my new purchase.

That evening while cataloging and re-examining the 1892-S under a good grading light I was in for a big surprise. On the reverse the words QUARTER DOLLAR definitely showed doubling. Also there was a slight doubling on the center arrow tip and the arrow tip just below the center arrow tip. However, the most visible doubling is on the R, DOLL just to the left of each letter.

After some research I found my quarter has the type #2 reverse which is more scarce than the type #1 reverse also found on 1892-S quarters. Also in the *BCCS Journal* Vol. VI #2 on page 15 is a picture of 1892-P quarter with a triple die. I thought this was unusual. This is very interesting with two quarters from different mints in the same year both showing this. Also I feel very lucky because this is the second doubled reverse I have found. The last was 1915-S quarter reported in *BCCS Journal* VI#3 page 16. I would like to thank my wife Teresa for the photos. Her photography hobby sure helps out in these situations.

Note that the strongest doubling begins at the first R in QUARTER and continues through the R in DOLLAR. So get those 1892 quarters back out. What you find might surprise you! ♦



REFLECTIONS ON COLLECTING, AND BARBER COINS

By Chris Weeks

Have you ever stopped to think about why you collect coins, and Barbers in particular? Some collectors may have an idea about the reason for accumulating items, but others may be unaware of the real reason. I remember as a child, saving old soda bottle caps and as I was older, marbles and their many varieties were part of my collecting interest. Then came toy cars, and baseball cards.

Those of us who enjoy history, ultimately gravitate to coin collecting, for coins seem to be a great connection to the past. Some collect a certain type or series because it is from a period of time in which we are interested. Variety collectors are bent towards classifying coins by die varieties, broken or cracked dies, etc. as it seems we collectors often like the unusual.

Often I feel that there is an unexplained, mysterious allure that old coins have for those who cherish them. The addicting qualities of coins are well known and documented. Many will sacrifice to obtain desired items, although there is absolute no need for them. Perhaps all collectors are driven by a mix of factors we cannot readily see. May be something from our childhood, a love of history, or the need for completeness in a chaotic world.

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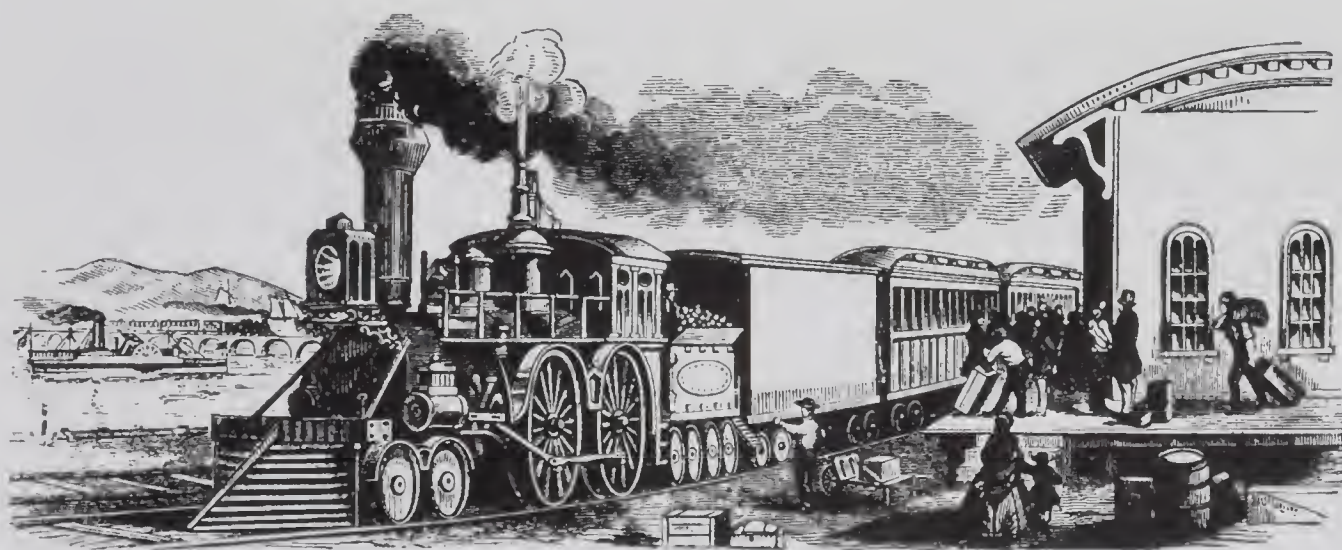
Why do we in the BCCS collect Barber coins? Enjoying the Charles Barbers design is one attraction. The noble head of "Liberty" reminds some of classical Roman coins. I for one have always felt that Barber coins were more attractive than the Mercury dime, Standing Liberty quarter, and even the Walking Liberty half. Barbers in most cases offer a greater measure of rarity, date by date, in any grade.

The period of time from 1892-1916 is one of many historical events. The World's Columbian Exposition of 1892-93, the beginning of the Spanish-American war in 1898, the opening of the Denver mint in 1906, the great San Francisco earthquake also during 1906, and Theodore Roosevelt's push for redesigning America's gold coins.

Barber coins were neglected workhorses in circulation, often worn down to about good condition and then melted for their silver content. Many dates are far rarer than realized in any grades, and quite rare in high grades. Mint marked Barbers from 1892-1904 are hard to find because mint mark collecting was not yet popular and they simply were not saved.

It would be interesting to know how many Barber coins were lost when the Titanic sank in the North Atlantic in 1912. In 1914 the first rumble of World War I was heard. I can remember finding a 1914-S dime in the middle of an abandoned WW I army camp near my home, wondering how many were lost in other countries. Many other historical events could be cited adding to the history collectors enjoy with Barber coins.

The uncontrollable urge to collect, for whatever reason, exists for the enjoyment of those who find it interesting and we coin collectors, call it numismatics. ❖



BARBER HALVES ARE VERY AFFORDABLE

By Thomas Lamarre

Assembling a complete set of circulated Liberty Head or Barber half dollars is an attainable goal for many collectors. Unlike the series of Barber dimes and quarters, the Barber half dollar series does not contain a single budget breaking rarity.

Designed by the Mint's chief engraver, Charles Barber, the new coins succeeded the long-running Seated Liberty dime, quarter and half dollar. On the obverse was a depiction of a masculine-looking Liberty wearing a crown of laurel leaves, tied by a ribbon at the back and having a headband inscribed with the word LIBERTY.

The reverse design was based on the Great Seal of the United States, an eagle bearing the American shield clutching a branch of olive leaves in its right talon, and a bundle of arrows in its left talon.

Extending from its beak was a ribbon bearing the motto E PLURIBUS UNUM. Above it were 13 stars representing the original 13 states.

Production of the three denominations of Barber coins began Jan. 2, 1892. Judging from the comments in numismatic publications of the day, the coins received only a lukewarm reception from collectors. Writing in the "American Journal of Numismatics", W.T.H. Marvin complained, "The head of Liberty is dignified, but although the silly story has been started that the profile is that of a 'reigning belle' of New York, she can hardly be called a beauty".

Initially, Barber half dollars were struck at the Mint in Philadelphia, and at the branch Mints in San Francisco and New Orleans. Examples from the branch Mints have a mint mark below the eagle's tail feathers. The 1892-O half dollar is particularly noteworthy because it was the first half dollar struck at the New Orleans Mint since the Civil War. Among the half dollars struck at New Orleans in 1892 were some with a so-called "microscopic" mint mark. Another unusual variety is the 1906-O with the reverse design rotated 140 degrees, first reported in the July 1963 issue of the "Numismatic Scrapbook Magazine."

The New Orleans Mint turned out large quantities of silver coins until 1909, when its coinage operations ended. Some New Orleans Barber half dollars were struck from domestic silver, but much of the metal came from South America. In addition, some O Mint half dollars were recoinced from worn silver denominations taken from circulation in the south.

The Denver Mint opened in 1906 and went on to strike Barber half dollars each year until 1915, except for lapses in 1909, 1910 and 1914. The same year the half dollar with a D mint mark made its debut, a press dispatch reported that counterfeit half dollars had been found in the Chicago treasury, in a shipment of coins from Texas. "The coins cannot be detected as spurious except by a close inspection of an expert," the writer explained. "Chief John E. Wilkie of

the United States Secret Service, identified them as some of a lot of counterfeit coins which were circulated in the United States three years ago, and were made in China by expert counterfeiters. They contain the legal amount of silver."

The Barber half dollar had considerable purchasing power throughout its lifetime. In 1913, for example, 25 cents an hour was considered a good industrial wage. During the period from 1905 to 1915, while no silver dollars were being minted, the Barber half dollar was the largest denomination silver coin in production. Few collectors could afford to set aside Barber half dollars, even though the coins circulated extensively. It was not until the 1950's that collectors removed virtually all of the remaining Barber half dollars from circulation. Until then, it had been possible to assemble complete or almost complete sets of Barber half dollars by searching through bankwrapped rolls of coins.

Not surprisingly, Barber half dollars are most frequently encountered in well-worn states of preservation ranging from AG-3 to VG-8. High-grade examples command significant premiums, and the collector requiring a single piece for a type set will find that an MS-60 Barber half dollar is much more expensive than a Morgan dollar, in the same condition.

A complete set of Barber half dollars comprises 73 coins, not counting minting varieties. The scarcest coins in the series are the 1892-O, 1892-S, 1893, 1896-S, 1897-S, and 1897-O. However, in a G-4 condition none is valued at more than \$115. The complete set in G-4 condition has a retail value of about \$1,100.

In December 1915, the Treasury Department announced a competition for new designs for the dime, quarter and half dollar. The following year, the Walking Liberty half dollar replaced Charles Barber's Liberty Head design. Barber, himself a noted coin collector, died in 1917 at the age of 75. ❖

Editors Note: This article is reprinted from the Canadian Coin News 11/19/96.

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Clamshell Lamination shows on the edge of this 1916 Liberty Head dime from James Redden of Indiana. This type of split planchet error is the result of impurities trapped within the metal.

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